

How to recite the Book of Allah and what is disliked and forbidden in it, and people's disagreement about that.

Al-Bukhārī transmitted that Qatāda said, “I asked Anas about the recitation of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he said, ‘He would lengthen syllables when he recited, “In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, Most Merciful.” He would extend the name “*Allāh*”, extend “*ar-Raḥmān*” (the All-Merciful) and extend “*ar-Raḥīm*” (the Most Merciful).’”

At-Tirmidhī reported that Umm Salama said, “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to put stops in his recitation. He would say, ‘*Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,*’ and stop, ‘*the All-Merciful, Most Merciful,*’ and stop. Then he would recite, ‘*Master of the Day of Repayment.*’” (*gharīb*, Abū Dāwūd transmitted a similar *ḥadīth*.)

It is related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “The person with the best voice is the one that I see fears Allah Almighty when he recites.” It is related that Ziyād an-Numayrī came with the reciters to Anas ibn Mālīk and was told to recite. He raised his voice and intoned. He had a loud voice and Anas uncovered his face, as he had a black cloth over it, and said,

“You! what is this you are doing?” When he saw something he objected to, he would remove the cloth from his face.

It is related that Qays ibn ‘Ubbād said, “The Companions of the Messenger of Allah used to dislike raising the voice in *dhikr*.” Those who disliked raising the voice in recitation of the Qur’ān included Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab, Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr, al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, al-Ḥasan, Ibn Sīrīn, an-Nakhā‘ī and others. Mālik ibn Anas and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal also disliked it. All of them disliked raising the voice with the Qur’ān and intoning it. It is related that Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab heard ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdu’l-‘Azīz leading the people and he intoned in his recitation. Sa‘īd sent a message to him saying, “May Allah put you right! Imāms should not recite like that.” So ‘Umar stopped singing. Al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad said, “A man recited in the mosque of the Prophet and intoned and al-Qāsim objected to that. He said, Allah Almighty says, *‘Truly it is a Mighty Book. Falsehood cannot reach it from before it or behind it.’* (41:41-42)” Mālik related that he was asked about *nabr* (raising the voice) when reciting the Qur’ān in the prayer and he disliked that strongly and objected to the raising of the voice in recitation. Ibn al-Qāsim related from him that he was asked about melody in the prayer and he said, “I do not like it.” He said, “It is a kind of singing which they do and for which they are paid money.”

One group permit raising the voice in the Qur’ān and intoning it. That is because, when someone beautifies his voice in it, it settles more deeply in the selves and the hearts listen more to it. They find evidence in the words of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, “Adorn the Qur’ān with your voices.” Al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib transmitted it as did Abū Dāwūd and an-Nasā’ī. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “He who does not sing the Qur’ān is not one of us.” (Muslim). There is also what Abū Mūsā told the Prophet: “If I had known that you listened to my recitation, I would have beautified it for you.” ‘Abdullāh ibn Mughaffal said, “In a journey in the year of the Conquest, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, recited *Sūrat al-Fath* on his mount and he used a quavering tone in his recitation.” Some of those who believed this

were Abū Ḥanīfa and his people, ash-Shāfi‘ī, Ibn al-Mubārak and an-Nadr ibn Shumayl. It is the choice of aṭ-Ṭabarī, Abū’l-Ḥasan ibn Baṭṭāl, Qāḍī Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī and others.

The first position is sounder because of what we already mentioned and will mention. As for using the first *ḥadīth* as evidence, it is not apparent. It is an example of the reversal of the normal order and in fact means, “Adorn your voices with the Qur’ān.” Al-Khaṭṭābī said, “That is how more than one of the Imāms of *Ḥadīth* have explained it, saying it is reversal.”

Al-Khaṭṭābī related from al-Barā’ that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Adorn the Qur’ān with your voices.” He said, “It means be melodious in the recitation and employ your voices to do it and take it as a sign and adornment.” It is said that it means to encourage people to recite the Qur’ān and persist in it. It is related from Abū Hurayra that he heard the Messenger of Allah say, “Adorn your voices with the Qur’ān.” It is related that ‘Umar said, “Make your voices good with the Qur’ān.”

It is to this sense that the words of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, refer when he said, “The one who does not sing the Qur’ān is not one of us,” meaning “the one who does not make his voice good with the Qur’ān is not one of us.” That is how ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Mulayka interpreted it. ‘Abdu’l-Jabbār ibn al-Wird said that he heard Ibn Abī Mulayka say that ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Yazīd said, “Abū Lubāba passed us and we followed him until he went into his house. He was a man of shabby appearance. I heard him say, ‘I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, “He who does not sing the Qur’ān is not one of us.”’” ‘Abdu’l-Jabbār said, “I asked Ibn Abī Mulayka, ‘Abū Muḥammad, what do you think of the one who does not have a good voice?’ He replied, ‘He makes it as good as he can.’” (Abū Dāwūd)

This is also the meaning of Abū Mūsā’s words to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: “If I had known that you were listening to my recitation, I would have made my voice good in the Qur’ān, adorned it and used *tartīl* (slow recitation).”

This indicates that he was quick in his recitation with a good natural voice. If he had known that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was listening, he would have extended his recitation and used *tartīl* as he usually did when he recited to the Messenger of Allah. He used to do that in order to increase the beauty of his voice when reciting.

We seek refuge with Allah from interpreting what the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said as meaning that the Qur'ān is adorned by voices or anything else! Whoever interprets it in this way has committed something terrible in saying that the Qur'ān is in need of someone to adorn it. It is Light, Illumination, and the Highest Adornment for the one who wears its splendour and is illuminated by its light. It is said that the command to adorn means to learn the readings and to adorn them with our voices. That implies: "adorn the recitation with your voices," since "*qur'ān*" means recitation as Allah says, "*The recitation (qur'ān) of dawn.*" (17:78) According to this interpretation, it is valid that it simply means "to recite" as we made clear.

It is said that the word understood as "singing" (*yataghanna*) comes from *istighnā*, "not having any need", not from *ghinā*' (singing). This was the interpretation adopted by Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna and Wakī' ibn al-Jarrāh. Sufyān related that from Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ. Another point is also related from Sufyān which Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh mentioned, which is that it means "to be enriched and without need of other words". This is the interpretation preferred by al-Bukhārī when he dealt with the verse, "*Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them?*" (29:51) What is meant by being enriched by the Qur'ān is not being in need of the history of nations. Interpreters have said that.

It is said that "*yataghanna*" means to display sorrow. In other words sorrow should appear in the reciter when he reads and recites, and it does not come from "*ghunya*" (being able to dispense with) because a different form of the verb would have been used for that. A group of scholars believed that, including Imām Ibn Hibbān al-Bustī. Their evidence was what Muṭarrif ibn

‘Abdullāh ibn ash-Shikhhkīr related from his father: “I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was praying and his chest was heaving like a cauldron from weeping.” They said, “This report makes it clear that what is meant is displaying sorrow. This is also supported by what the Imāms related from ‘Abdullāh: “The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, ‘Recite to me.’ So I recited *Sūrat an-Nisā*’ to him until I reached the *āyat*, ‘How will it be when We bring a witness from every nation and bring you as a witness against them?’ (4:41) I saw his eyes overflowing with tears.”

These are four interpretations and none of them indicate that recitation is done with tunes or quavering voices. Abū Sa‘īd al-A‘rabī said about “He who does not sing the Qur’ān is not one of us”: “The Arabs were keen on singing and using verse in most of what they said. When the Qur’ān was revealed, they wanted to use the Qur’ān as their chant instead of singing, and the Prophet said this.”

The fifth interpretation is what some claim as evidence for quavering and singing. ‘Umar ibn Shayba said, “I told Abū ‘Āṣim about Ibn ‘Uyayna’s interpretation regarding ‘singing’ meaning ‘beyond need’ and he said, ‘Ibn ‘Uyayna did not do well.’” Ash-Shāfi‘ī was asked about the interpretation of Ibn ‘Uyayna and said, “I know better than this. If the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had meant not having need, he would have said it. He said, ‘singing’ and so we know that he meant singing.” Aṭ-Ṭabarī said, “What is known in our view is that *taghannin* is singing in the language of the Arabs, which is using a good voice with quavering.” As for those who claim that it means ‘being without need’, that is not part of the language and poems of the Arabs. We do not know any of the people of knowledge who said that.

In respect of what aṭ-Ṭabarī claimed about *taghanna* not meaning *istighnā* in Arabic, al-Jawharī stated what we mentioned as did al-Harawī. There is nothing to prevent it meaning *istighnā*, as it is indeed more appropriate to accept that which is related from a great Companion as Sufyān reported. Ibn Wahb said about Sufyān,

“I have not seen anyone with better knowledge of the interpretation of *aḥādīth* than Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna.”

A sixth interpretation is what has come in the form of an addition in *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim which is that Abū Hurayra heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, “Allah does not listen to anything so gladly as He listens to a Prophet with a good voice chanting the Qur’ān aloud.” Aṭ-Ṭabarī said, “If it had been as Ibn ‘Uyayna said, there would be no point in mentioning a good voice and aloud.” The word “aloud”, can be part of the words of the Prophet, Abū Hurayra or someone else. If it is the first, which is unlikely, it is evidence of lack of warbling (*tatrīb*) and quavering because he did not say that. He said, “aloud”, meaning so that he and those around him can hear him as the Prophet said to someone he heard raising his voice in the *shahāda*, “O mankind! Be kind to yourselves. You are not calling out to someone dead or absent.” So there is no evidence for what they claim. Some of our scholars preferred this interpretation, saying that it is the most likely because the Arabs use the term translated as “singing out” for the one who raises his voice and directs it to someone absent even if it had no tune. He said, “This is the explanation of the Companion, and he knows their manner of speaking far better.”

Abū’l-Ḥasan ibn Baṭṭāl argues for the school of ash-Shāfi‘ī and says, “The removal of the difficulty in this question is found in what Ibn Abī Shayba reported ... from ‘Uqba ibn ‘Āmir who said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Learn the Qur’ān, sing it and write it. By the One who has my soul in His hand, it is more likely to escape than a camel from the hobble.” Our scholars said, “Even if this *ḥadīth* has a sound *isnād*, what is known absolutely and definitively refutes it: the recitation of the Qur’ān has reached us *mutawātir* from many shaykhs, generation after generation back to the noble era and to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and there was no making of tunes or intoning (*tatrīb*) related by them while they go into depth regarding the pronunciation of the letters, *madda*, *idghām*, *iḡhār* and other types of recitation.”

Furthermore, in quavering and intoning, there is putting a *hamza* on what does not have a *hamza* and a lengthening of what should not be lengthened. So the single *alif* will be made into two *alifs* and one *wāw* into two. That leads to an increase in the Qur'ān which is forbidden. If that occurs in a place where there is *hamza*, they make several *hamzas*. It may be said that 'Abdullāh ibn Mughaffal said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, recited on his camel in the Year of the Conquest of Makka (8/630) and quavered, which al-Bukhārī mentioned. He said, describing it, “*a' a' a'*” three times. That may mean *ishbā'* which is lengthening the vowel of the *madda* in its proper place.

It is also possible that the story of his voice has to do with the rocking of his camel, as it happens to someone in a loud voice when he is riding and his voice tightens and is cut because of the rocking of the camel. Since this is possible, then there is no evidence in it. 'Abdu'l-Ghanī ibn Sa'īd transmitted from the *ḥadīth* of Qatāda from 'Abdu'r-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr who reported that his father said, “The recitation of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was extended (*madd*) but there was no quavering (*tarjī'*).” Ibn Jurayj reported that Ibn 'Abbās said, “The Messenger of Allah had a *mu'adhdhin* who intoned. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “The *adhān* should be easy and smooth (i.e. without trilling). If your *adhān* is not easy and smooth, then do not give the *adhān*.” (ad-Dāraqutnī) If the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, forbade it in the *adhān*, it is more likely that he would not permit it in the Qur'ān which the All-Merciful preserves as Allah says, “*It is We who have sent down the Reminder and We will preserve it.*” (15:9)

This disagreement regarding recitation is a result of the meaning of the Qur'ān not being understood due to the repetition of voices and the great amount of quavering. If the matter goes further so that the meaning cannot be understood, then that is agreed to be forbidden. This is done by reciters in the towns of Egypt who recite before kings and at funerals and receive wages and stipends

for doing so. Their effort is misguided and their work is ruined. By so doing they allow the alteration of the Book of Allah and it makes it easy for them to be bold against Allah by adding to His revelation what was not in it out of ignorance in their *dīn*, deviation from the *Sunna* of their Prophet, rejecting the course of the righteous *Salaf* in respect of that matter, and longing for what Shayṭān has made seem attractive in what they do. They “suppose that they are doing good” while they repeat their error and play with the Book of Allah. We are returning to Allah, but the Truthful One, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reported that that would happen and so it is as he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reported it would be.

Imām Razīn and at-Tirmidhī al-Ḥakīm in *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* reported the *ḥadīth* transmitted by Ḥudhayfa in which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Recite the Qur’ān with the tunes and voices of the Arabs and beware of the tunes of the people of passionate love and the tunes of the People of the two Books [meaning the Torah and Gospel]. After you will come a people who quaver their voices while reciting the Qur’ān, as is done in singing and wailing. That will not go beyond their throats. Their hearts are tempted and attracting the hearts of those who admire them is what really concerns them.” “Tunes” refers to intoning, quavering the voice and being good in recitation, poetry and singing.

Our scholars state that this is like those of the reciters of our time who do that before prayers and in gatherings, using foreign tunes which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, forbade. Quavering (*tarjī’*) in recitation is to repeat the letters like the Christians do. *Tarṭīl* in reciting the Qur’ān is to recite slowly and deliberately, and to make the letters and vowels clear. It is like the petals of the daisy. It is desirable when reciting the Qur’ān. Allah says, “*Recite the Qur’ān distinctly.*” (73:4) Umm Salama was asked about the recitation and prayer of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and she said, “What do you have to do with his prayer! He prayed and then slept the amount he prayed. Then he prayed the amount he slept and then he slept the amount he prayed

until morning.” Then she described his recitation, which was an explanatory recitation, letter by letter. An-Nasā’ī, Abu Dāwūd and at-Tirmidhī transmitted it as being *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb*.